DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 081 729 SP 006 841

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TITLE A Proposed Model for Starting a Teacher's Center in the Schools.
PUB DATE [73]
NOTE 20p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Inservice Teacher Education; Program Administration; Program Planning; Staff Role; *Staff Utilization; Teacher Improvement; *Teacher Role; *Teacher Workshops; Teaching Programs

ABSTRACT

This article proposes a) a rationale for the development of teachers' centers, b) a model teacher center, and c) a model for the position of facilitator for staff development at the center. The rationale focuses on the voluntary exchange of teachers' ideas concerning their professional and personal lives. The model teacher center, based on the Bay Shore-Stonybrook Teacher Center, Long Island, New York, centers on a) the teacher's perception of himself, b) exchange of resources among teachers in workshops, c) administrative support for the center, d) involvement of support staff in the workshops, and e) involvement of personnel trained in organizational theory and communication and observation skills to integrate teacher resources. The duties of the facilitator for staff development include a) planning, implementing, and assessing renewal programs; b) assessing the training needs of center participants; c) experimenting and researching participant resources; d) assisting educational administrators in developing innovative strategies for teacher centers; and e) researching activities related to the educational process, teacher morale, and job satisfaction. (BRB)

ED 081729

A Proposed Model for Starting a Teachers' Center in the Schools

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SP 006 844

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A Proposed Model for Starting a Teachers' Center in the Schools

William L. Fibkins, Ph.D.

The purpose of this article is to share with the reader (1) a rationale for the development of teachers' centers, (2) a model that the reader may follow if he is interested in developing a center, and (3) a model for a new position in the school...Facilitator for Staff Development. This new role would be created to facilitate the development of teachers' center and other staff development programs. Some of the ideas presented here emerged from my experience as coordinator of the Bay Shore-Stonybrook Teachers' Center during the 1972-73 school year. Other ideas are of the speculation variety, based on some hunches I have concerning teacher education.

A Rationale for the Development of Teachers' Centers

From the author's vantage point there has been, unfortunately, little focus in the schools on renewal and career fulfillment programs developed by teachers. Although teaching is an extremely difficult and demanding job, particularly in this

transitional age which emphasizes teachers learning a new language centered around such new developments as "the open classroom", "behavioral objectives", "individualization", "performance-based teacher education", "competency-based certification", and the like, few schools have worked with teachers to develop systematic renewal programs for the professional and support staff. And, as pointed out in a recently released report, Work in America (1973), many renewal programs that are initiated fail because they are perceived by staff people as subtle efforts at manipulation or are led by people without the requisite knowledge, commitment, or charisma. That is, they are renewal programs developed by significant others for teachers rather than by teachers themselves.

For, as Bailey (1971) suggests, few professionals have suffered more painfully or seriously from "being done good to at" than teachers. In spite of the fact that they are the ones who work day in and day out on the firing line, the definition of their problems, of their roles, of their goals, always seems to be someone else's responsibility: supervisors, parents, college professors, textbook publishers, self-styled reformers, boards of education, state and national educational officials. It is of little wonder that teachers in the field are extremely sensitive to renewal programs that emphasize "what is good for them" rather than programs that they, the teachers, develop and implement.

For the teacher, renewal systems (e.g. graduate teacher education, inservice education, professional association workshops and conventions, teacher union and association training programs, state and national education department programs) up to this point in time have, in this author's opinion, been unattractive for the following reasons:

- Teachers often have little say or power in the development and implementation of these systems.
- Teachers are usually placed in the role of a passive learner or observer in these systems.
- The learning that takes place in these systems is often unrelated to the learning of the skills requisite for successful teaching experience in the schools.
- Often the only motivating factor for teachers to enter these renewal systems is for salary and graduate credit increment.
- Teachers are often unmotivated to enter into such systems because training programs are usually held after the completion of their work day and at a site far removed from their environment.

For example, graduate education programs are entered because the teacher literally has no choice. He is required to have this training by state law, and he needs the graduate credits if he desires a salary increment. Little emphasis is placed by the teacher on entering graduate school to renew one's self and to improve one's teaching skills. This training is often held at a university miles away, carried on in the evenings, and centered on activities that are often unrelated

to the nitty gritty problems of the real world of the teacher. Systematic procedures for assessing the skill development of teachers are often non-existent. And for all this the teacher has to pay out of his own pocket! To be sure, if one wanted to create a system that would work toward decreasing morale, vigor, personal and marital adjustment, and a system that would clearly de-emphasize teaching as a creative process, this system could certainly be utilized.

Professional conventions, workshops, and meetings are often attended only by those with "time" in the system (it is amazing to see how few "new" teachers are encouraged to participate in professional conferences) and often held at resort hotels so that teachers "can get away from it all". The real focus of these meetings is clearly not professional renewal or retraining. As Carkhuff (1973) suggests, the major function of these conferences is to bring together old-thinking people with older ideas. Carkhuff (1973) rightly cautions that so long as any organization continues to extend policy-making invitations to persons 20 or more years after their essential contributions, if any, were made, and then only with assurances that the person is no longer in fermentation, it is doomed.

Teacher associations and unions, although vocally sympathetic to renewal programs, have generally directed most of

their energy into salary negotiation and job security programs. At the same time, proposed legislation (e.g. Cook et al (A-6942) before the New York State Legislature would require the Commissioner of Education to prescribe a system of competency-based teacher certification effective after 9/1/75) and a movement on the national level toward competency-based teacher certification have made teacher groups sensitive to required recertification programs that could be developed under the guise of renewal programs.

Inservice education programs in schools often develop out of crisis situations (e.g. drugs, racial disorders, etc.) and generally have no systematic approach based on the needs of teachers, resources of the teachers, and how programs can be developed that wed the needs and resources of the staff. State Department of Education programs often emphasize performance-based teacher education and certification programs that utilize systems and behavioral objective training for teachers. These programs often result in increasing anxiety on the part of teachers in the field who usually have little participation in the development of such programs. As Combs (1973) suggests, one of the saddest aspects of the current press for behavioral objectives is the contribution it makes to the further demoralization of teachers. Citizens these days are demanding changes in education, and well they might. Such change is long overdue. Unhappily, pressure can also destroy morale.

The demands we are currently making on teachers are bewildering beyond belief. Hundreds of innovations are being ballyhooed by educators, administrators, parents. Civil rights, desegregation, tightening budgets, and more and more pupils on top of these expectations make the task overwhelming. Teachers already have too much to cope with. And now in many school systems it is proposed that they must add behavioral objectives to their already heavy loads. Some state departments of education are busily at work compiling thousands of behavioral objectives which teachers will be expected to know and seek for the children they work with, a process made even more frantic by federal agencies which make behavioral objectives an absolute requirement for educational research or program support. The madness has even spread to teachers' colleges, where teachers currently working in training are expected to check themselves out against thousands of teacher "competencies" - another name for behavioral objectives.

My point is that renewal and training programs, to date, have, in this author's opinion, had little positive impact on renewing teachers. The renewal interventions described above have often left the teacher more frustrated, tired, confused, and less creative than he was prior to the intervention. The most serious aspect of this whole process is that teachers have often felt powerless in these systems. Real renewal and

education programs allow for a vital role for the learner. What has been described above as "training" can best be labeled as processing, not education. As a direct result of this processing, teachers in the field today often see themselves as insignificant, having little resources and impotent to deal with the problems in their environment.

One of the real hopes of the teachers' center movement for this author is the potential the movement has for helping teachers assert their own power over training and renewal programs and, hopefully, to transfer this renewal atmosphere to changes within the institution. For the movement to establish teachers' centers, defined here as a physical facility within a school where teachers can meet on a voluntary basis to share ideas related to their professional and personal lives, clearly is one of the first efforts in this country to encourage teachers to develop, through a participatory democracy system, a community of learning and sharing within the schools. Yet little is known about the development of teachers' centers in this country, aside from the recent work by Bailey (1971), Fantini (1972), Pilcher (1973), Spitzberg (1973), and the current Teacher Center Study Project (1973) being conducted by the School of Education at Syracuse University. The purpose of the next part of this article is to provide a "how to do it" guide for school and university personnel interested in developing a teachers' center. The data are based on the development of the Bay Shore-Stonybrook

Teachers' Center at the Bay Shore Junior High School, Bay Shore, Long Island, New York, during the 1972-73 academic year.

A Model for Developing a Teachers' Center

The Bay Shore-Stonybrook Teachers' Center emerged from an inservice workshop, The Teacher as a Learning Activator, that was offered by this author, a counselor, and John Hessel, a school psychologist, at Bay Shore Junior High School in the spring of 1972. The workshop, an intensive experience held over a three-week period, emphasized the identification of staff needs, resources available within the staff, and strategies that we might utilize to improve the atmosphere within our building and classrooms. At the conclusion of the workshop, the entire group was interested in how we might continue this sharing-assistance process during the school day and at a comfortable place in the school. A core group of approximately 40 teachers was formed to consider a plan of action. In June I contacted personnel at the Teacher Center Project at Stonybrook University, who were very interested in coming to our building in September to help our core group of teachers develop a teachers' center. Strong support came from the building and district administrators in the form of endorsing the teachers' center concept, providing the core group with a room to house

center activities, encouraging the university to send two university staff members to our building two days per week as teachers' [illegible] facilitators, and supporting my interest in coordinating the activities between the various groups involved (e.g. core group teachers, university personnel, building administration, those teachers not involved at that point in time, and the non-professional staff). An informal agreement was arranged between the university and the school district to begin developing a teachers' center in the fall of 1973, with the notion that though the teachers' center would be available to all teachers in the school, there would be no pressure for teachers to participate. Staff would get involved because they wanted to. The center would begin with a core of teachers who had come forward for a variety of reasons--ideas, support, sharing, desire for growth--and would have the capacity to expand and reach others. The teachers would decide if they wanted formal or informal inservice training courses or workshops, curriculum investigations limited to specific "weak" areas, exposure to different teaching modes--behavior modification, open classroom, programmed instruction, etc.--and then proceed to coordinate a program that satisfied their goals. It was thought that personnel from the university would be helpful in offering resources in almost any discipline, but ultimately teachers from the junior high school would develop and run workshops for each other and share their own expertise. In

fact, the main focus of the center was to encourage the use of our own resources to help each other--teachers teaching other teachers. It was also thought that my role as a counselor and my training in participant observation would be useful in helping teachers to become involved in this process.

In the fall the core group of interested teachers, two staff members from the university, and I began to talk informally with other faculty members about the center concept and the notion of identifying staff needs and a professional development curriculum for the junior high school. The initial response was positive, although I observed that the notion of staff members offering training for other staff members during the school day was at first difficult for many teachers to conceptualize. Some teachers also voiced initial concern about the role of the university and the possibility of a hidden agenda on the part of the district administration. Some concern was also voiced about my role in the project. I had only been in the building one year--what was I really about? By the end of September, we had informally contacted every faculty member, emphasizing that this was an experimental idea and that, hopefully, they would be interested in participating in center programs at the level they felt most comfortable. We pointed out that there was no pre-planned program--it was a voluntary endeavor, and there was no clear program definition at this point. Our main approach would be to provide training for

each other in the easiest, most attractive way, and to learn, as much as we could, by doing rather than by a lecture process. At the same time the building administrators kept a low profile and did not interfere with these activities. Our initial efforts, then, were of a grass roots variety--reaching out to as many people in the professional staff as possible, and asking them to participate. Attention was also given to the non-professional staff so that they were aware of the development of the center and hopefully would participate as well. In fact, the notion of encouraging the non-professional staff to participate emerged as a top priority after receiving a positive response, particularly from the personnel who served as cafeteria aides and in clerical roles.

By October we had interested approximately 60 teachers (out of a staff of 120) to participate in center activities. With this core group we developed an experimental series of during-the-day workshops that would be held during October and November. The workshops were (1) Utilizing Audio Visual Aids in the Classroom, (2) Utilizing Small Group Procedures in the Classroom, (3) Ecology for Classroom Teachers, (4) Utilizing Behavior Modification Techniques in the Classroom, and (5) Utilizing Individual Instruction in the Classroom. Each of these workshops was offered by a team of staff people during their preparatory and/or lunch periods, and held in the center room, which was adjacent (fortunately!) to the teachers' dining

room. Each workshop lasted a minimum of three days. Teachers were encouraged to attend by word-of-mouth communication, and announcements prepared by the core group of teachers. Announcements were placed in lavatories, teacher rooms, even on windshields. Students were enlisted to hand out notices before and after school. It was our feeling that teachers are busy people, and, like all of us, like to be asked and reminded. The initial workshops were well received, with over 50 teachers participating in each workshop. Once this series ended the core group of teachers met again and planned another grass roots approach to the faculty to identify training needs and resources that might be offered at the center. It was thought that this process would best be carried on through a face-to-face approach, rather than by "more paper work" activities such as questionnaires and the like. Upon the completion of this "new sounding", a new set of workshops was developed for December and January, which featured trips to other teachers' centers in New York City and Scarsdale, slides of faculty members' trips to Africa and Russia, and workshops related to achievement motivation (a Saturday all-day workshop), small group procedures, music in the classroom, student-teacher communication, using novels as a motivating tool, the movie "Future Shock", to name a few of the offerings. As was the case in our first series of workshops, the workshops were usually offered over a three-day period during the prep and lunch periods of the teachers.

At the conclusion of this workshop series, we observed that interest in the center was increasing among faculty members who had not participated to date. We observed that teachers were beginning to "see" how a center might operate and how they might participate. The level of trust concerning the role of the administration, the university, and my role began to rise considerably. The initial fear and threat, which were very real, began to dissipate. Yet we found ourselves faced with a rather fortunate problem at that time. Some staff members were coming to members of the core group and indicating they could not get in to see and participate in the workshops due to other commitments. Could we present them at other periods beside lunch? The idea was good, but how could we free presenters for a full day or a number of days? In bringing the problem before our building administrator, we received support in the form of being able to use substitutes to free those teachers who were offering workshops. This time could be used to prepare as well as to present workshops. This new option was excitedly received by many of the faculty members.

For the remaining part of the year, we ran two additional workshop series (March-April, May-June) and concluded the center activities with an end-of-the-year brainstorming and planning session and buffet. The workshops in this period emphasized such diverse areas as presentations by student teachers, films by Carl Rogers, Spanish-speaking instruction,

inquiry method of teaching, utilizing television in the teaching-learning process, drugs and students, earth week, first aid, teacher-parent interaction, human relations, using materials in the learning process, as well as more systematic workshops related to achievement motivation, individualization, small group procedures, reading in the content area, and contract learning. In retrospect, we had more activities and interaction procedures available from our own resources than we were able to utilize.

Although our program had begun in September with little definition, we had in a relatively short time involved over three-quarters of the professional staff and many support staff people in center activities that emphasized an atmosphere of sharing and help among the entire staff. We had begun the process of assessing our own needs, identifying our own resources, and stressing that the "teaching" going on at the center was a helping, not a command, relationship. Spin-offs were beginning to appear with the transfer of our sharing-resource model from the center to the classroom. New uses of space, time, resources were developing both at the center and in many classrooms. We had also, again in a short period of time, found a way for teachers, university personnel, and administrators to work cooperatively on a project that was beneficial to all concerned. I might add that this cooperative process did not "just happen". In my role as coordinator, a

great deal of time was taken to communicate to all parties in the building (e.g. administration, teacher association people) what was happening at the center and how their particular resources and point of view could be utilized. Misunderstandings and rumor concerning the goals and objectives of the center had to be dealt with, particularly in the beginning stages of center development.

In summary, then, the following perspectives relative to teachers' centers might be useful to the reader as he moves toward the development of a center:

- In the beginning stages of a teachers' center, teachers do not perceive themselves as having resources to offer to their fellow teachers.
- Those teachers who identify themselves as having resources to share appear to serve as catalysts in helping other teachers to offer workshops and training.
- Administrative support appears critical to the successful development of a teachers' center. Materials, released time, space, and most important, conceptual understanding of the teachers' center notion all require strong support from building administrators.
- The involvement of support staff in workshops appears to alter in a positive direction the working relationship in the school.
- It appears that teachers who serve as workshop presenters generally increase their own self-esteem and degree of involvement in the school.
- It appears that personnel trained in participant observation, organizational development theory, and communication skills, and having <u>time</u> to become involved with teachers may be in the best

position to assist teachers in identifying resources and how these resources can be utilized in teachers' center and other staff development programs.

It is this last perspective, the development of a new position called the Facilitator for Staff Development, that I wish to consider in my closing remarks.

A New Position in the Schools - Facilitator for Staff Development

It is this author's opinion that a new role, Facilitator for Staff Development, is needed in the schools to help teachers and support staff personnel to utilize their own power, resources, and creative strategies in planning renewal and retraining systems. More specifically, personnel trained in participant observation, organizational development theory, child development, human relation and communication skills, and curriculum strategies might be utilized in schools to:

- act as facilitators for teachers' centers
- help teachers to plan renewal programs
- help teachers to implement and assess renewal programs
- help significant others in the school to assess the training needs of professional staff members, support staff, and administrators, and the resources available within the environment (e.g. school, district, community, university, BOCES, etc.)

- help significant others in school to utilize these resources in new and creative ways, particularly in reference to time, place, and atmosphere.

- help significant others in the school to experiment and research new voluntary approaches to certification and use of non-professional staff as assistants in the classroom.

- demonstrate teaching, communication, and organizational development skills for teacher, administrators, support staff personnel at the teachers' center and other appropriate settings.

- assist boards of education, district administration, department heads in planning creative strategies related to staff development.

- carry on research activities related to the educational process in the school.

- carry on research activities related to the impact of the school environment on teacher motivation, morale, and career satisfaction.

These are but a few of the activities that a Facilitator for Staff Development might carry on. His work area might be a specific school or family of schools, and his main function will be to assist personnel within the school to develop programs that attempt to meet the needs of their staff. He may not have an office, but probably will work out of a teachers' center and spend the majority of his time in face-to-face interaction in the school environment (e.g. classroom, teachers' center, hallways, custodians' room, and the community). He will be a specialist in the helping process. In this role he will work to "give up" and share his knowledge with all of the

people in the school community and attempt to avoid, as Bakan (1967) suggests, the role of mystical professional who maintains the role of the all-knowing individual. He will be, above all, a generalist who has been trained in a variety of intervention strategies and who can intervene in schools to facilitate renewal programs at the level the staff desires.

In concluding my remarks, I would suggest that we need at this point in time to develop a variety of teachers' centers with differing forms of governance, participation, and programs. Clearly, the pilot projects being considered by the National Education Association (1972), The New York Master Plan for Higher Education (1972), and the work being conducted by higher education personnel in Vermont, Ohio, and Florida offer possibilities for further research concerning teachers' centers and the staff support systems required at centers. My hope is that these programs maintain a voluntary aspect, and that teachers be involved at all levels in the planning and development stage. I would also caution that future programs be kept small and that we attempt to avoid large, regional centers that may take on all of the characteristics of our present colleges of education that we are trying to avoid via the teachers' center movement.

If certification and recertification are to become a part of future centers, then this should be decided by teachers and

the appropriate programs developed by them. The answer to teacher renewal programs, in fact, to the crisis affecting teacher education programs, is having voluntary training activities, attractively packaged and available in the environment, in which teachers themselves can develop systematic training programs that span their teaching career. To continue to run teacher renewal programs in the same way is to invite disaster for the profession.